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NETWORK A MEETING RECORD

Network A Plenary Session
October 6-7, 2005, Reykjavik, Iceland

Participants

Wendy Whitham, Australia
Jürgen Horschinegg, Austria
Christiane Blondin, Belgium (French)
Luc van de Poele, Belgium (Flemish)
Don Hoium, Canada
Tamara Knighton, Canada
Lubomir Martinec, Czech Republic
Jørn Skovsgaard, Denmark
Jorma Kuusela, Finland
Thierry Rocher, France
Elfriede Ohrnberger, Germany
Panyotis Kazantzis, Greece
Zsuzsa Hamori-Vaczy, Hungary
Júlíus Björnsson, Iceland
Gerry Shiel, Ireland
Ryo Watanabe, Japan
Mee-Kyong Lee, Korea
Hwan Young Jang, Korea
Iris Blanke, Luxembourg
Paul van Oyen, Netherlands
Lynne Whitney, New Zealand
Katrine Teigen, Norway
Gloria Ramalho, Portugal
Vladislav Rosa, Slovak Republic
Ramon Pajares Box, Spain
Anita Wester, Sweden
Erich Ramseier, Switzerland
Jason Tarsh, United Kingdom
Elois Scott, United States
Andreas Schleicher, OECD Secretariat
Jay Moskowitz, Network A Secretariat
Maria Stephens, Network A Secretariat
Euhwa Tran, Network A Secretariat

Observers

Anders Hingel, European Commission

Presenters

Tina Seidel, University of Kiel
Mary McLaughlin, Education Services
     Statistics Institute

Regrets

Eugene Owen, Network A Chair
Pavla Zieleniecova, Czech Republic
Botho Priebe, Germany
Felipe Martinez Rizo, Mexico
Anne-Berit Kavli, Norway
Anna Barklund, Sweden
Sevki Karaca, Turkey

Summary of Major Outcomes

Network A had several points of business and presentations at the meeting. The major outcomes were:

- With regard to the indicators for EAG 2006, the Network A Secretariat and the Analysis, Reporting, and Dissemination working group will first revise the indicators proposal and circulate it to members for comment. Next, draft indicators will be prepared to be reviewed by members at the next meeting. In addition, the Network Secretariat will obtain information from the OECD on the timeline for countries' priority rankings of EAG indicators and will request draft copies of the publication at various stages of editing.

- The Network A Secretariat and the Development working group will submit a proposal to the OECD to provide developmental assistance to PIAAC and will develop next steps for the international validation of the ICT framework.

- The Network A Secretariat and Data working group will proceed with the revision of the survey of national assessments and the collection of data, with the goal of making the results publicly available on-line pending approval by Network members. Additionally, the working group encourages countries to express their views to the OECD and IEA concerning their interests in international activities. A synopsis of members' discussions on this topic will be shared with the IEA General Assembly and the OECD Secretariat.

- The Network A Secretariat and the Development working group will ask members to identify areas of interest for new development work through a written consultation.

- The Network A Secretariat will report back to members on the outcomes from the meeting of the Networks A and C Joint Committee on a Long-Term Strategy to Study Teaching and Learning.

Welcome and Introductions

Maria Stephens opened the meeting, expressing regrets from Eugene Owen for not being able to attend and introducing new participants from Germany and Norway. Sólrún Jensdóttir from the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture then welcomed members to Iceland.

Next, Maria went over the agenda and proposed to replace the roundtable discussion on members' impressions and experiences from the July 2005 OECD/Japan Seminar (on Raising the Quality of Educational Performance at School and the Role and Impact of Internationally Comparative Evaluation and Assessment) with a discussion on members' interest in future research opportunities related both to PISA and more broadly to the INES project. The proposed change was accepted, and the minutes of the last meeting were approved without changes.

Update on INES and OECD activities

To open the meeting, Andreas Schleicher provided an update on activities within the INES project and the OECD. Topics included the new emphasis on consolidation of indicators for *Education at a Glance*, integrating countries from the World Education Indicators Project into the regular INES project, the OECD survey on teachers, teaching, and learning, and the

development of a strategy for the study of adult competencies. [A copy of the presentation is attached.]

Members then had an opportunity to respond with questions and comments. Anita Wester asked whether the decision on whether or not to take a "wave" approach to the teachers, teaching, and learning survey was still open. Andreas said that it was, and explained that there currently are two options for the survey. The first approach is a comprehensive survey, which would focus on the teaching profession from the primary to upper secondary level. The second, "wave" approach would provide an in-depth look at teachers in one ISCED level, with the survey covering teachers at different ISCED levels over time. Andreas pointed out that the difference is between breadth and depth, but that the comprehensive approach would likely be more promising for linking with PISA.

Several members asked for clarification on a number of issues, including the distinction between the teacher effectiveness study and the OECD teachers, teaching, and learning survey and how data from the planned sub-study in PISA schools would be analyzed (because of concerns about relating teacher data to student outcome data). In response to the first question, Andreas noted that the two activities were indeed distinct, clarifying that the teacher effectiveness study would focus on a review of existing research and would look at various approaches to collecting data on teaching in the longer term, whereas the OECD teachers, teaching, and learning survey would be a current collection of comparable data. Regarding the question on the survey's sub-study in PISA schools, Andreas specified that the analysis would be at the school, not the individual level. The main purpose of the sub-study in PISA schools is to contextualize the results, using what is known about teachers based on the information provided by the student and school questionnaire and now with triangulation from the teacher questionnaire. Finally, on the matter of teacher selection, Andreas explained that a sample of the teacher population would be selected in two stages, with first a selection of schools and then a selection of teachers. For those countries participating only in the sub-study of PISA schools, the sampling frame would include only schools that participated in PISA.

Next, the discussion turned to the topic of adult competencies. Jay Moskowitz asked Andreas to provide more information on the evolvement of PIAAC, commenting that the policy issues the study hoped to address (as described in the earlier strategy paper) seemed very broad whereas the proposed assessment (as described in the current strategy paper) seemed narrower. Andreas explained that, although the current paper may not give emphasis to developmental areas, there is a strong interest in developing measures that go beyond the ICT and literacy components that comprise the main assessment. The idea is to integrate an indirect assessment and test such a method's ability to provide information about competency areas beyond those traditional areas that we already know how to measure directly in a large-scale setting. He pointed to the pilot of the Skills for Life survey conducted in the United Kingdom as one example of a successful indirect approach to the assessment of competencies. Indirect assessments could provide profiles of the skills adults are required to perform in their work.

Anders Hingel stated that very few European countries had measured skills in adult competencies routinely—even in the more "traditional" areas—and that it could be beneficial to measure not only ICT skills but also their literacy and numeracy. Andreas noted that literacy and

numeracy also would be covered in PIAAC. He also clarified that the concept of an ICT assessment is not to administer a test on technology but rather to use ICT as a tool to assess adults' ability to effectively process information. He emphasized that the survey is still in the early stages, pending discussion among countries, and that no instruments have been developed yet.

Indicators for EAG 2006

In the next session, Andreas gave a brief overview of changes being made to *Education at a Glance*, explaining the decision to include fewer measures but with better explanations and analyses. Following the overview, Thierry Rocher presented three proposed indicators for EAG 2006: low achievers (students at level one and below level one) in the PISA 2003 mathematical literacy assessment, institutional differentiation, and attitudes and behaviors. [A copy of the presentation is attached.] Maria then explained that the purpose of the session was to seek members' guidance on further development, noting that the OECD and Network A Secretariats would then work with the Analysis, Reporting, and Dissemination working group to develop draft indicators to be reviewed at the next meeting.

The discussion began with a few technical comments on the indicator on low achievers. Jürgen Horschinegg recommended not using the imputed scores in calculating the correlation between low achievers in math and their performance in reading. Gerry Shiel suggested that Figure 1.2 in the indicators proposal should include the full range of performance levels on the graph in order to help those not as familiar with PISA better understand the concept of "level one" and "below level one." Erich Ramseier commented that—in addition to examining how low achievers in mathematics performed in reading—one also needs to take into account how low achievers in reading performed in mathematics. Correlations in both directions could aid in the interpretation of the results. He cited the example of Swiss students (who overall scored better in math than in reading), noting that low achievers in math were also low achievers in reading but relatively few of the low achievers in reading performed poorly in math.

Anders informed members that a European Commission study on equity using similar indicators was being updated and would be released the first week of November. Paul van Oijen suggested an additional indicator on high achievers, especially with respect to math and science. Andreas also added that gender would be an interesting dimension to consider in the attitudes indicator, as there is more variation between genders than among countries. Hwan Young Jang commented that instructional methods heavily influence learning outcomes and asked whether that could be taken into consideration when thinking about indicators to be included.

Several members commended the working group for suggesting innovative indicators that presented the data in a new light. Andreas also indicated that he felt the indicators were headed in a promising direction that would provide substantive, policy-relevant findings. Several members expressed concern with regard to the indicator on institutional differences and the case in many countries where students are in several different types of schools at age 15. Elfriede Ohrnberger also questioned why the proposed indicators drew from PISA results, which had already been released, and asked about the use of data from other sources such as IEA. Andreas

responded that most of EAG covered previously released results, because of its purpose in pulling data from across sources and in multiple topics.

Lynne Whitney emphasized the need to carefully but explicitly pull out the policy implications in the data. Andreas agreed, adding that any EAG indicator needs to state what the message for policy is and what inferences could and could not be made.

Jürgen asked about a technical review of the proposed indicators and next steps, and Maria answered that a technical review would take place within the Network. She suggested revising the proposal based on members' comments and suggestions from this discussion, with additional specification on some of the technical issues. Members could then review the proposal, share it with others in their country, and send back comments before the preparation of draft indicators.

Comments and questions from members then turned to a more general discussion on future EAG indicators. Referring to the table in Annex B of the Proposed Cyclical Development and Publication of Indicators in *Education at Glance*, a few members expressed concern regarding the apparent lack of indicators on education outcomes in future editions of EAG. Andreas assured the Network that data related to student outcomes always are ranked relatively high in importance by member countries and that new indicators on student performance would always be welcome. He also reminded members of the option of using the web to present relevant data not included in a published edition of EAG. Elfriede also asked for clarification on the list provided in Annex A. Andreas reported that the table was constructed for a review earlier in the year by the Joint Session of the Education Committee and the CERI Governing Board, and that it is not fixed.

Several members, including Július Björnsson and Jason Tarsh, requested an overview on the process and responsibilities in the development of indicators for EAG. Andreas responded that the work begins in the Networks, with proposals and drafts prepared in cooperation with the OECD Secretariat. He specified that the Joint Session reviews the publication at three stages, with the representatives having the final say on materials published in EAG based on a written consultation in which they are asked to rank the indicators in terms of importance for policy. Andreas added that perhaps the Networks also should be provided with access to the publication at each stage and that the timeline for the rankings and the stages of development should be the same as the previous year.

Maria concluded the session, acknowledging members' support for taking the proposed indicators forward and stating that she and Thierry would establish a timeline and work plan for the continued development of the indicators.

Report from the Development Group and Discussion on Adult Competencies

The second day of the meeting began with a presentation by Luc Van de Poele, who updated members on the activities of the Development working group particularly in relation to PIAAC. [A copy of the presentation is attached.] Luc concluded his presentation by asking for members' thoughts on the Network's involvement with PIAAC and feedback on the OECD's draft strategy paper for the adult competencies assessment.

Paul opened the discussion by asking for additional information on the role and composition of the PIAAC international expert group (IEG). Luc answered that the group originally consisted of a limited number of experts from a few countries but due to increased policy interest now includes representatives from more countries. However, he noted that the IEG would not exist for much longer because a decision should take place in November regarding the shape of a PIAAC governing body. Paul followed up by stating that the result should play an important role in the Network's consideration of partnership. Luc responded that the decision may not be made at the next meeting and suggested that Network A members should consider their interest regardless of the outcome of the IEG meeting and based on other potential benefits to the Network's scope of work.

Júlíus commented on the importance of linking PIAAC and PISA (e.g., via the reading frameworks), which provides a unique opportunity to look at the predictive validity of PISA and the development of adult skills over time. Jay informed members that Andreas had indicated earlier that PIAAC plans to have a relationship with PISA but that the plan is not articulated in the strategy paper. He suggested that those attending the IEG meeting next week emphasize this possibility. Luc also noted possible connections between PISA and ALL, noting that exploring these connections could be part of the work of the Development group.

Next, Anders shared with members information on the European Commission's current activities in the field of adult education, which includes a plan for a major skills survey. Member states identified indicators of interest, a final list of which should be released next week. The survey differs from the OECD's approach in its focus on 25- to 64-year-olds instead of 16- to 64-year-olds as well as its emphasis on literacy and numeracy rather than ICT as the foundation – though it has a shared emphasis on other job-related general skills. Anders stressed the European Commission's desire to cooperate with the OECD on an adult competencies assessment, as well as on the OECD teachers, teaching, and learning survey. However, he cautioned that the largest countries were not participating in the teachers' survey, and he hoped this would not be the case with the adult assessment.

Several members, including Lynne, Jørn Skovsgaard, and Wendy Whitham, expressed positive reactions to the OECD draft strategy paper and to the proposal of partnering with PIAAC. Jason, though, questioned the opportunity costs of this developmental activity, asking what kind of work would the Network not undertake in order to be involved with PIAAC. Though Gerry also expressed reservations about using ICT to assess adults, he stated that the Network should proceed with a validation of the ICT framework and supported a connection between PIAAC and PISA.

Final remarks concerned the logistics of the developmental work in validating the ICT framework and establishing a partnership with PIAAC, with several members asking for details on the processes. Luc delineated a procedure that would involve identifying experts specializing in the ICT literacy domain or large-scale assessment, providing these experts with background on the current ICT framework and its new application, and asking them to identify potential problem areas. Wendy suggested a document be prepared and distributed to members to ensure that all national experts would be presented with the same kind of questions, and Luc agreed that

this work could be done by the Development working group. Maria reiterated that countries will review the strategy paper prepared by the OECD Secretariat at next week's IEG meeting, and the Network will request a report on the official reaction from the IEG. Iris Blanke also requested information on roles in governing and implementing PIAAC when they became available.

Luc reminded members that the IEG's reaction should not be the only factor in the Network's consideration of undertaking the validation of ICT literacy framework and that the work should be done only if members felt enough interest for their own interests, e.g., new domains for PISA. No members expressed objections to beginning work in the validation of ICT literacy and submitting the proposal to the OECD Secretariat to provide assistance to PIAAC.

Report from the Data Group

In the next session, Iris updated members on the work of the Data group, with the first part of the presentation highlighting the results of the survey on national activities. [A copy of the presentation is attached.] Opening questions and comments focused on the possibility of collecting data for regional-level programs. Elfriede raised the point that in Germany, large-scale assessment is largely undertaken within each Land and asked if non-national programs were part of the survey. Wendy noted that Australia has sub-national programs as well but that she reported only on assessments that took place at the national level. She said that providing data on (in the case of Australia) state-level projects would be difficult as she would not want to increase the workload for state-level staff. She expressed her preference for keeping the survey focused on the national level, except in certain cases, such as Belgium, where it could be appropriate to community-level responses. Wendy also suggested the possibility that adding regional data could be voluntary. Luc noted that he would like to see data on regional-level programs, as these could provide valuable information, and Paul suggested that countries provide additional data from just one or two regions. Iris recommended using an asterisk by a country name or providing a link to indicate that regional-level projects exist but maintained that the data collection would continue to include only national-level programs for the time being. Erich also asked about the countries covered by this survey, and Maria answered that the intent is to cover all OECD countries.

Jason brought up the idea of establishing a bank of examination and test papers used in various countries. He noted that language would be a large barrier but that the Network members have the resources needed for translating the papers into a common language. He suggested that this examination bank could be an extension of the database on national activities.

Several members expressed concern regarding the terms used in the survey and the possible inconsistencies across countries in the way they classified their programs. For instance, Gerry stated that he had difficulty distinguishing between the categories "national assessments" and "national tests" and wondered whether the low proportion of countries reporting national examinations was due to confusion in terminology. He added that the term "foreign language" should be clarified (e.g., in his country's case, he would classify Irish as a second language, not as a foreign language). Július concurred, adding that all Icelandic tests serve multiple purposes and that there could be numerous varied interpretations of the terms currently used in the survey. In response to these concerns, Jay suggested revising the questionnaire into an interview protocol, with the Network A Secretariat conducting interviews with members in order to ensure

consistency. Iris addressed members' reservations by explaining that the first round of data collection was intended to be simple in scope and to serve as a pilot for a full survey. The survey will be refined (possibly with an interview/telephone component) and redistributed for a second round of data collection.

Wendy commented that despite the confusion in terminology, the data collected still served as a good source of general information on countries' activities and that additional details and clarification could be obtained from individuals from each country. Gerry, however, pointed out that misclassification of assessments could be damaging if the results were to become a public source of information, as planned. Several members stated that they had assumed the data were intended to be shared among Network members only and stressed the importance of ensuring comparability of the data if it were to become public. Wendy added that the data would need to go through a more formal checking process if it were to be accessible by the public. Jason suggested a closed-access website that would be password protected and available only to Network A members. Maria offered her thoughts, maintaining that comparability should be the goal whether or not the data eventually would be accessible by the public and that the decision to make the data public could be discussed after the revised tool is released to Network members.

The second part of Iris' presentation centered on the development of a strategy for participating countries to foster cooperation among international data providers such as OECD and IEA. Lynne also summarized the points discussed the previous day in the working group. She informed members that the group had decided on the need for a pragmatic approach that would attempt to shape behavior gradually. The group established that multiple players are involved (the OECD, the IEA, and member countries), and they believed that countries should make clear to both organizations the desire for joint programs and activities that would maximize countries' investments.

Jason emphasized that member countries in the two organizations should be more active in promoting cooperation. He added that many OECD countries seem to be opting to participate in PISA over TIMSS at the secondary level. Jørn pointed out that the distinction between the OECD and the IEA is that governments are the members in the OECD's work, whereas it is a research institution in Denmark in the IEA. Júlíus affirmed the working group's position on fostering cooperation between the IEA and the OECD. He acknowledged that the two organizations had different approaches but emphasized the value of collaboration between the varied approaches. As a follow up to Jørn and Júlíus' comments, Jason reiterated his view that the IEA is being "competed out of the market" in secondary-level assessments and that countries can and should be more aggressive in presenting their opinions to both organizations. Paul also reminded members that the European Union should also be taken into account, as an international data provider, in these discussions.

Gerry asked for clarification on how negotiations regarding a possible connection of PISA and PIRLS was to work. Ryo Watanabe clarified that this was not certain yet but that those attending the IEA meeting the following week could ascertain this information.

The discussion next centered on the logistics of presenting the Network's viewpoint to the IEA General Assembly at the meeting the following week. Lynne repeated that the working group

would like members to speak on behalf of their own countries. She added that there also could be the opportunity to indicate that the Network would be supportive of this approach and asked for members' feedback. Maria informed members that Val Plisko would give a general overview of Network A in Eugene's place and that one of the Network members (Lynne if scheduling could allow) would give a more timely update, reporting on this plenary session.

Jay then reminded members that PISA focuses on 15-year-olds while the IEA assesses those at a younger age. He raised the question of how a bridge to the IEA could be established if OECD countries wanted to assess a younger cohort. Wendy expressed concern that starting negotiations with the IEA on that basis is premature as no decisions on the terms of reference for PISA 2009 have been made yet. Jay clarified that the majority of countries participating in the PGB indicated in the country survey that they would like to see a younger age group and his question concerned how that would be carried out. Elois affirmed that one component of the terms of reference is to examine the feasibility of linking the younger IEA cohort with the PISA cohort and that a strong interest should be emphasized.

Lynne stressed the importance of balance and the need to present the members' views to both the IEA and the OECD Secretariat.

Overview of Developmental Activities in Network A History

Following the discussion, Luc gave a brief overview of how new activities within Network A had been developed in the past, explaining that work in new domains were previously begun in small groups. He cited examples such as the GOALS project, the ICT literacy framework, and the cross-curricular competencies project. He proposed that the Network resume the development of new work in small groups, beginning in the Developmental working group with an open invitation for others members to join in the work. He listed possible projects suggested by the working group, and Maria asked members to think about future activities in which they would be interested and about which they will be approached through a written consultation, which could be conducted by the end of the year.

Presentation on Studies of Teaching and Learning

The afternoon session began with two presentations on studies of teaching and learning. First, Mary McLaughlin from the Education Statistics Services Institute gave a presentation on a U.S. study of instructional processes and student content engagement. [A copy of the presentation is attached.] Responding to a follow-up question, Mary clarified that the study tests teachers' subject matter knowledge as well as their knowledge of student content engagement, and that the study is currently only in the pilot stage, with preliminary results expected in December.

Second, Tina Seidel from the University of Kiel gave a presentation on a video study of science classrooms in Germany. [A copy of the presentation is attached.] Paul opened the discussion by asking about the characteristics of good teachers. Tina replied that it would be better to delineate characteristics of good teaching and listed several components, including clear instruction, learner-oriented instruction, and allowance for students' conceptual misunderstandings. She

added that these characteristics of optimal teaching may not necessarily be observed all in one lesson but can be seen as a pattern over time.

Erich asked for Tina's thoughts about the value-added of conducting a video study in an international framework. Tina commented that there was relatively little variation in teachers' lessons within the German sample and that participation from additional countries would be beneficial in increasing examples of teaching. However, she noted that any cross-national study would have to have a strong theoretical focus and a narrow range of inquiry.

Panyotis Kazantzis pointed out that a teacher with high content knowledge may not necessarily be an effective teacher if he cannot understand the level at which his students are learning. Tina concurred, stating that the findings in Germany were that a teacher's high content level knowledge was not a guarantee of good teaching.

Jay raised two final questions. First, he asked about the amount of additional learning that students exposed to effective teaching obtained compared to those receiving "less effective" teaching. Second, he noted the high cost of video studies and asked if Tina's research had shown any correlation between data from teacher interviews/questionnaires and data from the video study that would allow the interviews/questionnaires to be a reasonable proxy for the video observation data. For the first question, Tina answered that learning gain was equivalent to about half a year and referred members to the publication *How to Run a Video Study* for more details. Regarding the second issue, Tina explained that the various sources of data were intended to collect different information and thus could not be used in that way.

Discussion on Studies of Teaching and Learning

In the next session, Maria updated members on the purpose of the upcoming meeting of the Joint Committee on a Long-Term Strategy to Study Teaching and Learning. Elois asked for clarification on the difference between the work of the committee and the teacher survey referred to in the PISA Terms of Reference. Maria explained that the committee would explore new methods in studying teaching. It is the follow-up on the long-term component of the original Task Force's strategy paper; whereas the OECD teacher survey is the shorter-term component. She added that the direction of work was open, and while the long-term research questions identified in the original Task Force's strategy paper would be used as a starting point, the discussion would likely evolve over time.

A few members questioned the necessity of a two-year long study and the small number of countries providing financial support. Maria noted that countries' support varied from financial funding to attendance at meetings and that previous discussions had shown general support for exploration in this area.

Update on International Activities

Maria then briefly updated members on the progress of other international assessments, including ALL, PIRLS, and TIMSS, and Ryo provided the Network with an update on SITES and TEDS. Andreas informed members of an initiative proposed by Norway to launch a value-

added study in schools. Jason asked about the German PISA 2003 value-added study, and Elfriede announced that a full report comparing the German Länder would be released at the beginning of November.

Closing and Next Meeting

Following these updates, Maria summarized the main points of the meeting and announced that the next meeting of Network A will be in Korea on March 9-10, 2006, in conjunction with the PGB meeting on March 6-8, 2005.

Paul announced that this was his last Network A meeting and that Jules Peschar would return as the Netherlands representative. He also thanked all members for the chance to participate in the Network with them. Iris expressed her appreciation for the two presentations on studies of teaching and learning and requested informative presentations at the next meeting as well. Maria indicated that presentations at the next meeting would likely focus on topics suggested through the written consultation.

Finally, Wendy thanked Maria for chairing the meeting on short notice. Maria thanked Júlíus for his hospitality, the OECD and Network A Secretariats for their support, and the members for their thoughtful inputs and continued interest and participation in the Network. Júlíus added a thank you to members for coming to Iceland, and the meeting was adjourned.

Attachments

Presentation on an update of INES and OECD activities
Presentation on proposed indicators for EAG 2006
Presentation on adult competencies
Presentation on the work of the Data group
Presentation on a Study of Instructional Processes and Student Content Engagement
Presentation on a Video Study of Science Classrooms